

VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK

By Marianne Hansalik

There are coral reefs all over the world that are becoming endangered but at Virgin Islands National Park the coral reefs are being protected! Colorful fish from the Caribbean swim in the turquoise bays. Tourists lay down in the sun on the white sand beaches enjoying themselves looking out for sea turtles that are laying eggs. At the sugar mill a trail flows through the woods with history all around them. At this park you can never be bored; there are wildlife, history and never ending activities.

Virgin Islands National park isn't any boring park; there are all sorts of fun things to do. Jumbie Bay is a great example. People can go under the waves and snorkel till they wrinkle up like a raisin. Children who are under the waves can see all sorts of colorful fish swishing by their faces. Chartered snorkeling tours are a water full experience. Kayaking, scuba diving and wind surfing are also fabulous options. If all that water is too much camping at Cinnamon Bay is good for the land lovers. This private place has the best view of the other islands. If this is still not enough; there are always walking tours that highlight the history of the island.

The history in this park is absolutely FABULOUS!! The whole park, 5,000 acres, was donated by the Rockefeller family in 1956. In the park the Annaberg Sugar Mill, named after the owner's daughter, Anna, used to be one of the only 25 running sugar cane factories. Today there is a trail leading through the ruins of the factory along with slave quarters and the windmill. Cinnamon Bay also has a rich history like the sugar mill. Cinnamon Bay got its name from a Danish planter who was exploring and came across a big cinnamon tree. In Danish he called it chica boom which means cinnamon tree. Eventually it got changed to Cinnamon Bay. President Clinton signed a law that Cinnamon Bay would be protected by the park along with the coral reefs which are coming endangered. The history isn't the only thing interesting; the wild life is very mind-grasping.

There are all sorts of interesting animals and plants in this park. In the sea there are many types of coral such as fire coral, brain coral, elkhorn and staghorn coral. All these types of coral provide homes for the animals. Coral is an endangered because ships' anchors are destroying them. Colorful fish from the Caribbean such as Groupers, grunts, and yellow tail Snappers swim in the coral reefs. Hawksbill, leatherback and green sea turtles roam the ocean blue enjoying themselves.

Unfortunately not all of the turtles are enjoying themselves freely because of poaching. People are snatching their eggs and shells which could be sold for lots of money. Outside of the water a traveler might see geckoes and iguanas blending into the trees. Sounds of humming birds are heard all around. The only mammal on the island is the fish eating bats.

Virgin Islands National Park information goes on for ever and ever and is waiting for more people to see it. If anyone is heading south tell them to visit the Virgin Islands national park, a place full of coral, turquoise bays and white sand beaches.